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GRIZZLY TENNIS TEAM
A QUESTION MARK

bill schwanke
3-25-69
sports one & minor



sports

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MISSOULA---

Naming Montana's top five tennis players this spring isn't too difficult, but coming up with that sixth man could cause problems.

Dr. Brian Sharkey, who will join Dr. Jules Karlin of the UM history department as an adviser to the UM tennis team, said there are a lot of men out for that sixth position.

"I have to base most of my decision as far as ranking goes on what I saw of the players last fall," Sharkey said. "Because of our unusually late winter weather, we haven't had much chance to practice outdoors as a team this year, and we have to go on an extended road trip next week."

Sharkey has coached UM tennis for several years, but last year was in the East doing research work. Graduate assistant Tom Whiddon took over the program with Karlin's help. Sharkey had to start from scratch as far as scheduling was concerned.

The team will leave Missoula Tuesday for Spokane, Wash. to meet Whitworth College and Gonzaga University Wednesday. It's on to Cheney for an April 3 match with Eastern Washington State College.

Washington State University will provide a stiff challenge for the UM netters April 4, and April 5 the Grizzlies will face defending Big Sky Conference champion University of Idaho in Moscow.

After the rugged six-day trip, the Grizzlies will have one week of practice before opening up at home against the Missoula Tennis Club, which will be comprised of what Sharkey called "the best local talent we can face."

Of the 18 matches scheduled for the Grizzlies, 7 will take place in Missoula. The season will close with the conference championships May 16-17 in Missoula.

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In addition to those schools included on the opening trip, Montana will meet schools like Utah, Utah State, Eastern Montana, Montana State and Weber State during its long slate.

Sharkey indicated that from all appearances, returning sophomore Rick Ferrell of Spokane will play in the number one position for Montana as he did last year.

Two returning lettermen will battle for the second spot. They are three-year veteran Steve Meloy of Helena, a senior, and one-year numeral winner Brian Kekich of Missoula, a junior. Obviously, one of them will play number three.

A similar situation will occur in deciding the number four and five players. Two newcomers, freshman Gary Israel of New York City and junior Fred King of Rochester, Minn., will be the combatants in this case.

"After the top five, I'm not really sure what is going to happen," Sharkey said.

"But something has to give shortly."

There are other players from last year's team who could contend for that sixth spot on the squad, but Sharkey declined to mention any of them without further discussion with Karlin.